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MARRIAGE

Girls witness serious love-making and courtship earlier than boys. At dances small girls follow their more experienced sisters and cousins, imitating their movements during the dancing and afterwards sitting with them while the young men pay them compliments and try to persuade them to retire with them into the long grass. When a girl is about twelve or thirteen initiated boys begin to court her, and when she is about fifteen or sixteen she has at least one lover and probably one in each of the villages neighbouring her own. She passes through a succession of love affairs, besides more casual affairs. I doubt whether any girl in Nuerland goes to her husband a virgin. 833 881

As a rule boys are initiated from about fourteen to sixteen. Unlike the girls, whose social life develops slowly from childhood to marriage without any sudden change of status, the boys jump at initiation from the grade of boyhood to the grade of manhood, and the character of their social life is correspondingly transformed; though even before initiation boys make some adjustments in their way of life in anticipation of the status they will acquire when they have passed through the rites. In particular, they abstain from eating in the presence of unrelated girls. A small boy eats with his mother and sisters, but when he is about six he eats with the other boys of the household when the womenfolk have guests, lest they might feel embarrassed at the presence of a lad, though only a small one, and, bit by bit, he gets into the habit of eating with them regularly. 881

After initiation a lad takes on the full privileges and obligations of manhood in work, play, and war. Above all, he gives himself whole-heartedly to winning the favours of the maidens of his neighbourhood. Courtship now rivals devotion to cattle as his major interest. In speaking of a recently initiated lad Nuer often say: 'And now he has become a man and will court the girls.' He takes every opportunity for flirtation which offers itself. His chances are chiefly at dances, and Nuer youths, for this reason, attend as many wedding dances and other drum-dances as they can in their district during the rains and the harp-dances at neighbouring camps in the dry season. In speaking of these dances young men speak always of the girls they will meet at them, of how the girls will admire their finery and their excellent dancing and display of spearmanship and duelling with the club, and they add: 'And then of course we will spend the night in courting.' 833

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883 That Nuer do not attend dances chiefly for the dancing is shown by their lack of interest in organizing harp-dances in dry-season camps when it is unlikely that unrelated girls from other camps will be able to attend them. 'Who wants to dance with his sisters?' they ask. But when there is a chance of love-making Nuer youths, who appear so slothful and lethargic to the foreign traveller, think nothing of walking and running ten to fifteen miles to attend a dance.

When a dance breaks up, about nine o'clock at night, the youths seize the girls by their wrists and lead them apart. They then either walk about the dancing-ground in pairs and small groups, the youths and maidens hand-in-hand or with their arms round each other's waists, or they sit in small parties at the grass-fringed edge of the dancing-ground. They sit wedged together and exchange endearments. Nuer girls are attractive companions at any time and are enchanting when decked with flowers and ornaments and anointed with oil for dancing, and the young men are charming and indefatigable flatterers. Wooing in Nuerland is an arduous business. A youth must be profuse and tireless in pouring out compliments to the girl whose favour he solicits, and he often sits opposite her with a stick in his hand to make lines on the ground to mark each new compliment.

When these parties break up the youths and maidens pair and continue flirting *tête-a-tête* in the grasses in privacy. It rests entirely with a girl whom she goes with. She has her lovers who meet her whenever they can, at dances, at her father's home, and at trysting-places, and she will probably go with one of these. When several young men want to go with her they tell her to make her choice from them, for all those who have been sitting together with the girl belong to one *dep*, the fighting line of a village, and are therefore all kin who will not quarrel about a girl. A lover from a different village would not try to break into the circle once it has been formed. She makes her choice—if she already has a lover in the *dep* she will choose him—and the other youths move away. Apart from her established lovers, a girl has no difficulty in knowing if a man is particularly attracted to her by the way he dances and conducts his spear-thrusting and club-duelling exercises during the dancing. If she likes him also she can probably so arrange matters that he is able to seize her wrist when the dance is beginning to break up.

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MARRIAGE

Intercourse does not necessarily take place when a youth and maid are alone together on the night of a dance. When the relationship between them is a *luom buol*, a dance love affair, or *luom thura*, a dancing-ground love affair, a more or less constant attachment, and not a *luom goka*, a love affair of the high grasses, casual lust, I was told that the girl is likely to refuse her favours, though he will entreat for them, unless she feels sure that he intends to marry her and has the cattle with which to do so, for no respectable girl wants to be a *keagh*, an unmarried mother. No attempt is made to conceal an attachment of this kind, which indeed imposes on the girl modesty and shyness towards her lover in the presence of other persons such as a bride is expected to show towards her bridegroom or a newly-wed towards her husband.

Parents are not cognizant of all the love affairs of their children, but if a girl forms a constant attachment she may tell her mother about it, and a father will probably hear of a similar attachment of his son. They are not likely to say anything unless there is danger of incest. All the young men of a hamlet or small village, who are kinsmen and dance together, know of one another's courtships and escapades. Likewise, all the girls know about one another's lovers and amours, for they also keep together at dances. The only person who may interfere is a brother in an affair of his sister, for her virtue is his responsibility, but he will only do so in certain circumstances. He keeps an eye on his sister and knows who is courting her, but he will only come between her and her lover if he suspects that she is having regular relations with a man without cattle or that she is giving herself to all and sundry.

It not infrequently happens that a girl becomes pregnant while still unmarried. If the young man has cattle he will be expected to marry her, and if she is not a profligate he will be glad to do so. If he has insufficient cattle he cannot do so, and though another man will not object to taking her as a wife, he is more likely to take her as a second wife than as a first wife, and he will pay fewer cattle for her bridewealth. It is therefore in the brother's interest to see that this does not happen. It is also in his interest to prevent his sister from becoming a wanton. A man does not expect his bride to be a virgin, but he does not care to marry a jade. A girl of easy virtue may find plenty of lovers but no suitors, and after bearing an illegitimate child is likely to become a concubine for the rest of her life, to the detriment of her family herd.

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834 Therefore, if a youth takes a girl away from a dance to his *dep*
●833 and sits with her among his friends and other girls until he finds an opportunity to get her to himself he will not be molested, because her brother has seen her leave the dance in company, and by the time she is intimate with her lover he will be doing the same himself. But if a man is indiscreet enough to take her off by herself as soon as the dance is breaking up he is asking for trouble, though the brother may not say anything if the youth is a friend of his whom he knows to have cattle and serious intentions towards his sister. If the young man is a casual lover he may tap him on the shoulder with the butt of his spear, when he will run away; or even fight him. However, there need be no trouble if the conventions are observed.

Courtship seems to be freest among the Eastern Jikany. There love affairs are carried on more or less openly, and a youth need not fear the girl's brother so long as they are on friendly terms and he is discreet. The girls of this area are, however, said to be less free with their favours than those of the Lou tribe. They are exacting in their demands for fine speeches, but will not allow intimacy unless they are sure that pregnancy will be followed by marriage. The Lou girls are said to be easier and their brothers more difficult. To the west of the Nile, at any rate in some parts, it is said that a girl's brother has the right to take a male calf and a cow calf if he catches a man having relations with his sister, but this penalty seems only to be exacted when it is believed that pregnancy has ensued, and I was told that if the beasts have been seized they will be returned should it be found that she had not conceived. If she is pregnant, they will be kept pending marriage negotiations.

584 A youth may have several sweethearts in different villages and a girl several lovers in different villages. At this time of his life a young man models himself on the accepted pattern of what a young man should be to win the approbation of his sweethearts and the regard of girls generally. He likes to know that they are looking at him and saying about him, when they chat together and share their secrets, that he is a *wut pany*, a real man. He pays great attention to his appearance and takes every opportunity to excel in feats of endurance and courage. It is for the benefit of the girls that he keeps behind his oxen in dry-season camps, 'where the people have met together', and chants poems. When asked who they

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or dearth of pasturage, the people remain on their village sites or move only a short distance from them, they insist on making a camp nearby, for such is the ancient dry-season custom.

The windscreen (*gaaw*) does not seem to be used in Western Nuerland. In the camps I have seen there both sexes live in grass huts plastered with dung, the huts of married couples being rather larger than those occupied by youths or girls. The huts appear also to be more carefully constructed than in Eastern Nuerland. In Nuer camps one sometimes sees a rough shelter (*gaaw dorni*) constructed of branches with grass, often the riverside *baar*, thrown on top to give shade for the young calves during the heat of the day. Otherwise they are taken into the huts or tethered beneath a tree.

In the front of the windscreens are tethered the cattle. When they are grazing the kraal is a circle studded with pegs and sprinkled with drying dung. When they come back in the evening they are tethered to these pegs. Adult cattle are placed in the centre of the kraal, the calves on the outside nearest to the windscreens where they are under the watchful eyes of their owners, and the sheep and goats in small clusters here and there between the adult cattle and the calves. Oxen of enormous size, with great spreading horns trained into artificial shapes, stand docile and lethargic, prominent among the other cattle. A man places his favourite ox in a line with the entrance to his windscreen so that he can see it without moving.

Before and during milking youths display themselves in company with their favourite oxen. Boys lead the oxen round the camp and their young owners walk behind them brandishing their spears and leaping gracefully into the air, shouting and singing the while. This display is called *rau* and is one of the customs of dry season camps. It is not practised in wet season villages because a youth does not show off before his own family but when he has a large audience, including girls whose favours he wishes to win. Youths often continue to display themselves till the cattle are driven to pasture.

Milking starts between 6-30 and 7-00. If the morning is misty it may be delayed till slightly later. [redacted] men are forbidden to milk

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512 226 883 About noon youths and maidens bathe in the river wherever a shallow sandy stretch offers a clear playground. They do the same at inland lakes but much time is there given also to fishing. The young people sit and splash in the water and the sexes flirt and wrestle in and out of the water. At about 2.30 they return to the camp where the girls churn the morning milk and pound and grind millet for the evening meal. The men turn over the drying dung with their sticks and then, having nothing more they need attend to, most of them return to their windscreens though one or two youths may try and spear fish in the shallows and they are joined there by older boys who are not herding the calves.

512 233 237 372 About 4-30 p.m. the small calves are brought from the shade where they have spent the day and are tethered in the kraal. The men hold them between their legs and lifting up their heads compel them to swallow water. At this time the boys bring back the larger calves and goats and sheep from grazing. Members of each household tether their animals. Generally one or two men now go out to meet (*luow*) the returning herd. Others gather the dried dung on hides from the heaps into which boys have swept it, and each owner of a windscreen makes up the evening fire on his hearth. There is no need to light the fires as they have been smouldering all day long and it is only necessary to clear away surface ashes and heap the new fuel on the exposed embers. Dense clouds of smoke arise and envelope the camp.

512 233 462 264 By 5 o'clock cows which have recently calved come running home and herald the approach of the herd which appears from 15 to 30 minutes later. Adult men tether the cattle of their household and women and boys commence at once to milk the cows and they finish this work before sunset. The women then prepare the evening meal and finish their dairy work. The men sit in their windscreens and await the meal which is served between 7 and 8 p.m. Nuer eat twice a day: in the morning and in the evening. The evening meal consists of millet porridge, with cheese or butter, or both, poured over it. The morning meal is generally the remains of supper heated up or with hot milk poured over it.

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In a big camp there is often dancing at night and youths and girls pay evening visits to neighbouring camps to take part in the dances. There is a special dry season dance quite different from the drum dances of the wet season. It is called *dompiny*. A small hole is dug in the dancing place and a piece of hide is stretched tightly across it. A length of cord is stretched over the hide and is pegged on either side of it. A small stick is placed on the hide over the centre of the hole and the cord is supported by the top of the stick and slopes on either side of it to the ground. The cord is thus kept taught. The hole acts as a sounding box. The performer obtains music by striking the cord with a thin stick held in his right hand as he sits cross-legged before it and by muting it with his left hand or with a stick held in his left hand. By this means he produces rhythm. Sometimes another man beats at the same time with his hand on the hide near the sounding hole. The people dance and sing, men dancing opposite women. A man holds his hands above his head like an ox's horns and as he sings he steps backwards and the girls opposite him move towards him. They thus circle round the musical instrument.

Girls sometimes have their own singing parties in these camps. They sit and sing to a rhythm made by slapping their outstretched thighs. This is called *patpat*. Youths who are courting the girls often join them and take part in the singing. It is customary for young men to visit girls and court them when the day's work is done.

If there is no dancing at night—and in the smaller camps where there are few girls, and these mostly kinswomen, the young men do not care to start a dance—the inmates of the camp chat in their windscreens and at the thresholds of their huts for an hour or two after the evening meal and then fall off to sleep. Sometimes they chat till close on midnight and occasionally a man who is happy walks amid the cattle, ringing an ox-bell and singing for an hour or more. Sometimes an animal has strayed from the herd. Then everyone is up and its owners are out in the bush till late at night searching for it.

One day in a Nuer cattle camp is like another. Calves are born and we see time passing in the stages of their growth. Nor does life

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According to Jackson, after the wounds have completely healed the boys go into camp. He says that a group of about a hundred boys is formed and that a bull is provided for each of them. They settle in a spot about an hour's distance from the village and gorge themselves with meat. A young boy or an old woman cooks for them but they may not be visited by girls. During this time they indulge in feats of endurance and when they have eaten all the bullocks they return to their villages.[1] This account by Jackson is not entirely in accord with my own information which does not lead me to consider these camps as part of the institution of age-sets (*rir*) but as only incidentally associated with it. According to my information the newly initiated boys do not always collect in camps after their wounds have healed but only in some years, about every second year, and then it is not only the new initiates who form a camp but also members of their age-set who have been initiated in previous years and even members of senior age-sets. I was told that even a married man would attend and that a man would attend until his son was old enough to replace him. I think that these camps (called *wäk* or *kwaar*) are a custom separate from the age-set system, though related to it by the fact that its members are mostly recruited from the unmarried youths of the village and are hence mainly of the same age-set. These camps are also held, moreover, during the closed periods when "the knife is hung up" and no further initiation is allowed to take place. They are held when the first harvest, the *kuel* war, is ripe. Any youth who possesses a bullock, other than his favourite beast (*dit thakäc*), will take it to the *kuel*, as these camps are also called, in general with all camps which are without cows and the ordinary activities of pastoral life. A youth will ask his father to give him a bullock so that he may join his comrades at their feasts, and if his father has no beast to spare and his son is insistent in his request he will arrange for him to share a bullock with a friend and will later pay the owner a male calf for the half which is lost to his son. The young men spend a month, or even two months, in the camp, living mainly on meat, for a bullock is killed every three days or so. Nevertheless they also eat a quantity of porridge, since women in the neighbourhood of the camp, which is generally five to ten miles from the homes of the youths, will make porridge and will bring it to the camp to exchange for meat. The skin of slaughtered bullocks and some parts of the meat are taken back to the village for the older men. Apart from eating meat and indulging in the pursuits incidental to this season of the year, especially

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 148-153.

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• 883 hunting, the camp does not seem to have any expressed purpose or activity. Certainly I never heard that there was any organized educational training. The young men return to their homesteads in time to eat the *mak*, a mush made by beating out the ear and grinding corn not yet fully ripe and still soft.

881 561 What I have recorded above is all I know about the ceremonies of cutting the tribal marks and the periods of seclusion and licence associated with the *gar*. So far nothing has been said about the organization of the *ric*, the age-sets, and I will now turn to this point. According to Jackson " the initiation ceremony should in theory be held about once every 15 years, and this may have been the rule when the tribe was less numerous than it is at the present moment. Nowadays the boys are initiated when there are sufficient of them to make it worth while."[1] It seems to me that this estimate of 15 years is too large since it would mean that many youths would be from 20 to 25 years old at their initiation, which would be contrary to the purpose of the rite. I was told by a good authority in Lou country (Tebriel) that there is always a four years' interval between the closing of one age-set and the commencement of the next one. This information accords with Father Crazzolara's statement that " as a rule the *Gar* takes place once every four years " but he adds that the cattle chief may deviate from this rule for public or even private reasons[2]. He reckons that we may allow about seven years for *ruk-ric* when reckoning a man's age : thus members of the *Pilual* age-set are from 15 to 22 years of age, members of the *Rual* age-set from 22 to 29, members of the *Tawkaw* age-set from 29 to 36, and so on. If we can say with fair certainty that there is a four years' interval between each period of initiation we must therefore conclude on this reckoning that each period of initiation lasts about three years. But I am not convinced that we can make so rare a deduction, nor that there is complete regularity in the periods of time during which initiation takes place. Father Crazzolara himself says that the period of initiation may last only a year or up to four years according to the district.[3] On the other hand, at any rate in Lou country, this period may last for several years and youths have been initiated into the *Nilgar* age-set continuously for at least eight years. Judging from this

[1] Op. cit. p. 140.

[2] " Die eigentliche, nicht das Gar alle vier Jahre vorgenommen. Der Landeshäuptling kann aus besonderen Gründen kurze oder längere allgemeine Sperre verfügen. So wurde 1928/9 von einem Landeshäuptling bei der Eröffnung der Gärten aufgerufen, es seien jetzt bei den Eingeborenen, als sehr viele Hirsevorräte gegen vorher soll sehr fast nichts mehr, wenn man (die Eingeborenen) noch sehr lange keine auch gegen[?] vorher hätten, wenn sie auch 3 oder 4 Jahren." Op. cit. pp. 183-4.

[3] Op. cit. p. 183. " Die Gargemeinde kann aus jede oder auch bis vier Jahren, je nach dem Distrikt, dauern."

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He will respect his elders but they will treat him as a man and with the consideration due to an equal rather than to an inferior.[1] 884

He has now the supreme joy, to which every Nuer boy looks forward with longing, of entering into the full life of the cattle. He will wander with them over their dry season pastures and will have his own bullock, perhaps more than one, to meet when it returns to camp in the evening, strutting along and waving the long tassel attached to its horns as it tosses its head. He will rub its back with ashes in the evening and perhaps invoke the spirit of his lineage or his dead ancestors as he does so. He may now order a boy to lead his bullock round the camp at morning or evening so that he can leap behind it in the sight of the girls, and may walk among the cattle at night ringing a cattle bell and singing about his cattle, his relatives, and his loves, activities which would be mere presumption in a boy, who would not indeed attempt them. 561

The elation, the feeling of happy superiority, which accompany this change in a boy's life are evident in his behaviour, and their opposites are strikingly shown in the cases of boys who for some reason have not been initiated at the same time as their contemporaries and playmates. The position of such a boy is pathetic. His friends have been promoted and he is left behind. They are men and he is still a boy. Once his equals they have become his superiors. I knew well one boy in this humiliating position and it was painful to observe how acutely he felt it on occasions. He evidently felt shame at the performance of his boys' duties and tried to associate as much as possible with his initiated companions, with whom he had everything in common, rather than with the smaller boys with whom he was socially identified. I think that his friends tried to spare him humiliation as far as they could by treating him as one of themselves though his work and play were of necessity different from theirs. On one occasion a man of about 26 years of age was beating the boys for neglecting their work and idling around my tent, but when he came to this boy of the same age as himself he raised his hand to strike him and said : " And you ! what are you doing here ? " but he smiled and did not strike him.

After initiation also a boy may give himself over to the absorbing interests of love-making. He may now dance and flirt (*woc*) and indulge 836 883

* We must not exaggerate this equality. Elder sons will still call an initiated person who is young enough to be their child *dhol*, boy, and will order him to fetch them things they require. I have no instance of corporeal punishment in this the difference has between during a lo-nuer to an elder stays who ejaculate to you as his son and being ordered about like a servant by a superior.

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836 in sexual relations with girls. Before initiation boys may go to dances
•883 but they merely watch and do not take part in them. After initiation they go with the other youths of the village and form part of the dancing group of their lineage (*dep*). When the dancing is over they seize the hands of the girls and sit and flirt with them. A boy will now commence permanent love affairs with girls, and a girl will be recognized by his friends as his love (*lemde*). No uninitiated boy would stand the chance of having a relationship of this kind with a girl, however large he might be, as she would merely laugh at him and call him a boy and tell him to go and become initiated. It is true that boys before initiation will have congress with small girls, but this is not socially recognized, and if his elders hear of it they will tell him not to be a fool as he is only a boy, but after initiation it is not only none of their business what he does, but also he is expected, nay, compelled, by custom to embark upon courtship.

411 An initiated boy is now invested with two external signs of manhood
884 besides the scars on his forehead. He is given a spear by his father and
421 also a bullock, which he had generally been promised before the operation. If he is lucky he will also get a bullock from a maternal or paternal uncle. A boy will seldom possess a spear of his own and if he carries one he will almost certainly be found to have borrowed it from a relative though he may become the owner of a fishing spear. The possession of a spear is a sign of manhood and it is an object of great pride. One is surprised at the real feeling a Nuer expresses for his spear, almost as though it were animate and not a mere weapon. He is never tired of sharpening and polishing it. It is always in his hand, not only when fighting, hunting and travelling, but also when dancing, leaping behind his bullocks, playing with his comrades, and even when he lays it down it is never far from his side. As the Nuer possess no knives a man's spear does service not only on those occasions when Africans generally make use of it, but on those occasions when other peoples use a knife, for culinary purposes, cutting leather in tether making, cutting ox's hide for a bed-rug, and other purposes.

233 A boy is even prouder when he becomes the owner of a bullock and
554 is invested with a bullock name. Even a small boy will speak of his
553 father's bullocks as "our bullocks," and will often regard one of them,
421 the calf of the cow he habitually milks, as his own special one. But it is only his in the general psychological sense of family communism. It

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231/553 custom of taking personal names from their cattle in addition to the personal names they are given soon after birth. I have discussed elsewhere[1] the general social significance of names and other modes of address among the Nuer and here I speak only of their cattle-names and principally of their ox-names, these being of chief importance.

These names are often spoken of in writings about the Nuer as bull-names, but ox-names, in the use of the word 'ox' to denote a castrated bull, is a more correct designation.[2] Nuer speak always of such a name as *cut thak*, the name of an ox, and *thak* is a castrated animal in contrast to a *rut*, an entire animal. It is true that when a youth takes his name from a beast it may be entire, but it will be castrated later. Nuer may not castrate a male calf till it is nearly two years old, but they do so before it is likely to gender with the cows. It is not for pedantry that I make the distinction: it has a logical, and perhaps psychological, appositeness to the equation of man and ox in sacrifice.

Ox-names are essentially the names of men, males who have passed through the rite of initiation to manhood. Boys may take ox-names in play but only in imitation of their elders. Likewise, maidens may take ox-names, from bull calves of the cows they milk, but they are mainly used only between girls themselves and in the nature of a game, copying their brothers; and the names are short-lived. Married women use cow-names among themselves, but, here again, this is similitude, and it has none of the significance of the ox-names of men. Perhaps also here again the distinction between the copy-names of boys, girls, and women and those taken by men may be important because of its logical relation, which concerns our present discussion, to the fact that men, and not boys or women, are the sacrificial agents. The two sides of the standard equation are the human male and the bovine male, man and ox.

231 [577] 913 When a boy is initiated his father gives him in sign of his manhood an ox or, as I have explained, a bull calf which will later be castrated; and this ox, which he describes as '*thak gaveda*', 'the ox of my cutting (initiation)', becomes his *dil thak*, what I have spoken about as his favourite ox (Marno's '*Lieblingsrind*'), though

[1] 'Nuer Modes of Address', *Uganda Journal*, 1948.

[2] Throughout the literature on the Nuer, 'ox' or 'steer' or 'bullock' should in most cases be substituted for 'bull'.

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[Nuer]

the word *dil* has generally the sense of 'pure', 'true', 'perfect', or 'aristocratic'. It is the ox of perfection. It is the young man's friend and companion. He plays with it and fondles it. He composes poems about it and sings them to it, and he gets a small boy to lead it round the camp in the morning or evening as he leaps behind it chanting poems. He walks among the cattle at night ringing a cattle-bell and singing of his kin, his loves, and his cattle, and he praises this ox among all other oxen. He makes tassels to hang from one of its horns, and he loves to see it toss the tassel in the air with a sweep of the neck. He acquires an iron bell to hang round its neck, and no music, unless it be the ox's lowing, is sweeter to his ears than its tinkling in the pastures. He goes to the edge of the camp to meet it when it returns from grazing in the evening. He is never tired of describing its points, and as he does so, and also in dancing, he may hold up his arms in imitation of its horns. Should the ox die he is downcast; and should he die it must be sacrificed at his mortuary ceremony.

The youth now also enters through this ox into a new kind of relationship with God, the guardian spirits of his family and lineage, and the ghosts of his ancestors. When he has fathered it in the kraal for the night he may wet it, removing ticks from its belly and scrotum and picking out adherent dung from its nose; and he may at the same time rub ashes on its back. Ordinarily I think he does this simply because the ox, which has suffered from parasites throughout the day, gets relief from its back being rubbed, but I was told that he may occasionally as he does so speak a few words to God or to the ghosts. While it is not until a man marries and has children and an independent household that he sacrifices

FIG. 3
Hollowed-out ambatch log, used as stool, &c.

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231 animals, dedicates them to spirits, and in other ways makes formal
883 use of them for religious purposes, nevertheless, the ox a father
776 gives his son at initiation provides him with a direct means of communication with the spiritual world. It is more than a possession, more even than part of his social personality—it is a point of meeting between soul and spirit and has therefore a sacramental character also.

231 From the colours, their distribution, the shape of the horns, and
553 other peculiarities of the ox of his initiation a youth takes, or is given by his companions, his ox *thak*, his ox-name. It may be the same word as that by which the ox's markings are indicated, but generally it combines the name for the markings with a prefix descriptive of something connected with the ox. For example, a man whose favourite ox is black and white (*riel*) may call himself *Luthriel* or *Luariel*, *luth* being a large cattle-bell and *lue* a long tassel attached to one of the horns. At first only his age-mates may [561] know his new name, but the older people soon get to know it too, for they hear his mates greet him by it and they also hear him shout it out as he displays himself with the ox in the cattle camps which are formed soon after initiation. Also, young men of about the same age call out their ox-names, with many embellishments, to one another at dances, often after a bout of duelling with clubs, and when in a dance two lines of youths stand opposite each other and shower ox-names on one another preparatory to a spectacular jump into the air in unison.

The calling of a youth by a name the same as, or derived from, that by which his favourite ox is referred to is perhaps the most striking example of, and evidence for, what Professor Seligman speaks of as 'identification'. Indeed, in listening to Nuer poems [538] one is often in doubt whether it is the ox or the man that is being spoken about. The representations are never entirely distinct. Somewhat different, though related and also very striking, is the [552] custom called *thak moc*, the calling out of the (name of the) ox. A man shouts out the name of his favourite ox—the ox's name, not his ox-name, which may be an elaboration of the ox's name —when he hurls his spear at an enemy or at his quarry when hunting or fishing, for example, '*moc riel*', 'black-and-white (ox)', or '*thakda moc riel*', 'my black-and-white ox'. In some of my earlier writings I have translated *moc* by 'invocation' and 'to invoke', following Driberg's translation of the Lango